

The **Clash**
the **TITANS**



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The Clash of the Titans & Other Short Stories

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1. The Clash of the Titans

Life in the rural areas was fascinating especially for young boys of my age. This was during the golden days in the rural areas before life was not yet much ‘diluted’ as is with Westernisation and globalisation. Assisting in herding cattle once in a while meant the opportunity to harvest wild fruits, swim in shallow rivers, watch bull fights and most important witnessing boxing bouts meant for the archives. I used to cherish the days I would spend time with the boys in the *bundu* making sure all was well with our cattle. My mother would prepare me *amaqebelengwani* (hope I got the spelling right) as provision for the day out with the herd boys. *Amaqebelengwani* was prepared from a mixture of flour and meali-meal and baked in *musekesa* leaves.

In my village were two bullies, Zizhou and Brave. The two men were village renowned herdboys. The two virtually were on the payroll of the entire village. They indeed enjoyed their jobs as herdsman. In terms of physique, the two appeared to be evenly matched. Their physique would have made Mike Tyson look like a rank amateur. Brave Vangezi was the village *mzungu* (white). Because of the colour of their skin the Vangezi family commanded an aura of invincibility that pervaded our village. This was during the colonial era when ‘coloureds’ were afforded a better status than blacks by the colonial authorities.

Zizhou was the ‘raw’ self-proclaimed heavy weight champion. More famous for his brawn than brains, Zizhou had spent his childhood on a plot with his matrimonial uncle where he would demonstrate his immense physical power by carrying two 50 kg bags of maize. He is said to have

terrorised his schoolmates to an extent of being expelled from school. He thus never went beyond fifth year in junior school. After his expulsion from school, he began to herd his uncle's cattle. Herdboys in the surrounding areas soon fell victim to Zizhou's bullying. They could not dare report him to the elders for fear of victimisation. He had gluttonous tendencies and ordered fellow herdboys to bring him food of which they easily obliged to the request. After treating himself to sumptuous meals he would take a nap while the rest of the herdboys would see to it that all was well with the cattle.

Brave would pride himself as a karateker of note. We all believed he was because of the 'black belt' he tied around his waist. He was at pains to speak English the so-called 'coloured way'. To us this meant such phrases as, 'take him halfway Jimmy' which we were made to understand meant 'beat him'. Brave had a relatively happier upbringing as his parents could afford to buy him 'descent' clothing and food. Moreover, they could afford to send him to school albeit going to school was a pastime for him. He never excelled in his school work except managing to scratch through with mediocre grades. For this reason, he did not do any post-junior school education. Brave soon became a regular feature at Baradzanwa Business Centre with most of his time spent in a drunken stupor. He had also become a chain smoker. His regular visits at the business centre earned him the nickname 'Baradzanwa'.

Baradzanwa Business Centre is play host to revellers of the ilk of Brave. The story as always was the same, '*Ndimekerewo one*' (buy me a beer). This is the communal anthem at rural business centres like Baradzanwa. There is this misplaced belief that all visitors especially from the diaspora have bottomless pockets – perennial pockets – that

like a deep spring never run dry. One enjoys sharing time with the village comedians like Brave who takes you down memory lane with their brilliant sense of humour. Laughs come thick and fast. However, the downside of places like Baradzanwa is that there has been an increase in crime. It appears it makes more sense to call a thug a thug and not a gentleman. These individuals are spoilers to an otherwise tranquil environment.

The perceived 'black belt' Brave had, made him a much feared person at Baradzanwa and earned him yet another name, 'Jekacheka' – a type of grass that damages skin of animals and human beings. His 'black belt' earned him many well-wishers who bought him beer as a 'protection fee'. He was very indefatigable when it came to telling stories about his 'exploits' as an accomplished kareteker. He would give graphic details of the karate courses he attended in Harare. People would discuss in hushed voices the unlikelihood of Brave having done karate sessions in Harare because as long as everyone remembered, he had never left the village. However, for the fear of antagonising him, no one dared question the authenticity of his claim.

As youngsters we used to debate who of the two would come up tops, between Zizhou and Brave, in the event of a fight. More often than not the debate would end as a stalemate. I for one would not hide my fierce loyalty to Zizhou perhaps because he was my cousin. We all hoped for the clash of the two titans. One day our hopes came to fruition.

Those days there was a funny way of signalling the start of a fight. We would construct two 'breasts' with soil perceived as resembling and representing those of one's mother. If one of the protagonists would kick one of the

‘breasts’ – those of the rivalry’s mother – a fight would immediately ensue. This was simply because kicking the ‘breast’ was an insult to one’s mother. On that day, Zizhou did not take time in kicking the ‘breast’ of Brave’s mother and the fight started. Our adrenaline was pumping hard and we all kept guessing as to what would happen. It was indeed a tortuous cliff hanger. Fists flew, powerful jabs landed on target. The two opponents pulled out all the stops to win the bout. Zizhou had an edge with his agility, pure strength and single-minded determination to win. After 20 minutes, Brave threw in the towel and the fight was over and we all celebrated Zizhou’s win. Brave had gone from invincible to invisible in that short space of time when he was vanquished by the undisputable heavy weight champion of the village. Back home, Brave mobilised his siblings to revenge. The two, however, never really saw eye to eye after this fight.

2. When University Graduates Were Royalty

University graduates were a rare breed among the *so-called blacks* in colonial Zimbabwe. So-called blacks because I don't believe there exist black people but chocolate skinned people. Neither do I believe there exist white people but pink skinned people as far as colour definitions are concerned. Now those days, a few studied at the then University of Rhodesia (now the University of Zimbabwe) while a handful were awarded scholarships to go and study abroad. When they returned home armed to teeth with their newly acquired degrees, they literally brought life in the villages to a standstill.

In 1976 a cousin sister of mine who had just graduated in the USA came home. The rumour mill in our village went into overdrive with many weird stories about how she looked like, how she spoke, what she ate and the most weird one being that she 'coughed English' – whatever that meant. It so happened that as her relatives we were supposed to shower her with gifts. What else could we have given her besides a live free range chicken? I was asked by my parents to take the chicken (the highest honour that could be bestowed on a VVIP) and present it to the family's 'most famous daughter'. I gathered my courage (and in fact one had to) and went to my cousin's home. I found several other cousins with their presents (chickens) waiting to greet her. My cousin was said to be asleep so we waited patiently as we figured out what she looked like. Voila, the door opened and there she was, dressed in a pair of longs, afro hair and all. We could not hide

our excitement at seeing our own university graduate. A first university graduate in the family and indeed in the village. And by the way, not only was she a university graduate but had also travelled by air (air travel was preserve of a few those days). We exchanged a few pleasantries before she disappeared only to reappear in her academic regalia. We broke into song, our 'fear' of her suddenly melted as we realised that after all she was our sister. I can assure you that she got over 30 chickens that day. I always laugh with her about this with this cousin sister of mine who is now a well to do business woman in the capital.

Another equally interesting episode that same year was about a kinsman of ours, Takaenda Mhiri who had graduated with a BA and MA in England. It so happened that he was asked to give a sermon at Vungwi Church. He was dressed in his academic attire on that day. I have hazy recollections about the theme of his sermon, but what I remember for sure is that he mentioned his BA and MA degrees *ad nauseam*. Of course not that we were bored, I don't think anyone cared to listen about the message of his sermon, that is if there was any. People were mesmerised by his academic regalia. After the service we looked at him from head to foot, from foot to head, again from head to foot and we could not help but marvel at his achievement. He was much of a folk hero when we were growing up. I remember that same year in class someone was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up and he said, 'I want to be Takaenda Mhiri'.

In the 70's school graduate heads were very much revered. They were a charismatic species; people in communities surrounding their schools would fall over each other in trying to please them. Gore was one such head. He had a huge following of dyed in the wool devotees who

would do anything to please him. He had the whole Ruhode community eating out of his hand.

At assembly he impressed us with his exploits as a ‘good’ English speaker and also with his ‘sound’ advice. I remember his advice was that candidates were supposed to feed on nutritious food (like eggs) on the eve of the exams. I recall a funny incident when we were sitting for our end of year exams in 1978. I visited a friend of mine, Manqiwa to do revision work. Lo and behold, I found him feeding on a dozen boiled eggs. When I asked him to justify his voracious appetite, he calmly said he was following instructions of headmaster Gore. Such was the headmaster’s appeal that we all believed that if we ate eggs before an exam this would translate into good passes no matter how blunt one was. Legend has it that he was so feared that when the national anthem was being sung, students 3 km away from school buildings would stand at attention oblivious of the fact that Gore was not even seeing them. This was a result of his character as a walk about headmaster – he rarely stayed in his office but walked around the school yard. His use of ‘earth shattering language’ made us think he spoke the language of the white man like the white man. At assembly almost on a daily basis he would say something like, ‘you will suffer the consequences’ at every opportunity.

His favourite pass time was gardening. We would bring manure from our homes to help improve the fertility of the soil. Those who did not have cattle would go to the nearby hill to collect *murakwani*. Like Caesar in the Colosseum, he would watch us toiling like we were slaves. I strongly suspect that he would use proceeds from the garden on alcohol. I am inclined to that view because he was always in a state of inebriation.

Gore was also a master at mind games. There was a time when cattle from our village strayed into the school garden and made quick work of the vegetables thereby earning the wrath of the school head. Gore uttered very uncomplimentary words about people in our village. This did not go down well with my uncle Tonde. Uncle Tonde by virtue of age was the village headman and he took it upon himself to discipline Gore once and for all. My uncle's immediate response was to 'visit' Gore armed to teeth with a *shambook*. My uncle had one weakness which Gore would happily exploit – love for alcohol. When Tonde arrived at the Gore residence he found them treating themselves to a heavy breakfast (which meant lots of eggs and a huge tea pot then). Sensing danger, Gore offered my uncle tea and a plate full of bread and eggs which Tonde could not resist. As if that was not enough, my uncle was given a 750ml bottle of brandy. Suddenly Tonde 'forgot' what he had come for and soon began to talk about developmental projects. Gore's mind games had carried the day.

3. The Story of 'Keluto' the Fisherman

Our neighbour, Hwiza Mombe was of the zebra (*dube*) totem and thus earned himself a relationship with the Marasa family of the *dube* totem. By virtue of him being younger than our father, Hwiza (as his name was pronounced) was our uncle. He would come home and assist with many chores like ploughing, weeding etc. Thus he became very close to us especially my brothers and I.

Hwiza was a funny character. We would enjoy his stories during his 'working' days in Bulawayo. As he narrated his exploits, we would be glued to our seats staring at him with all possible attention. One such story was about *zvikwambo* (goblins) which were kept by one Mafios somewhere in Ntabazinduna, so said Hwiza. One day Mafios was transporting the goblins to Bulawayo and they [the goblins] began to complain about the smell of petrol. The goblins could not pronounce the word petrol correctly. Instead they would say, 'keluto'. That's how Hwiza earned himself the nickname 'Keluto'. Soon, everyone in the village called him Keluto. Most people forgot the name Hwiza such that the name stuck on him like a bad breath. In these many stories he would tell us, I would easily detect Keluto's soft spot for those of the fairer sex.

Legend had it that Hwiza had spent most of his time as a 'maraita' (pick pocket) in Bulawayo. Most of the 'proceeds' from his pick-pocketing was spent with the MaTshumas, MaGumedhes – the Shabeen Queens. He became very popular with the Shabeen Queens because he was a spendthrift. He had love affairs with a majority of these Shabeen Queens. His womanising character was legendary.

During his heyday as a playboy in Bulawayo, Keluto is said to have dated dozens and dozens of women. After falling on very hard times, women began to desert Keluto in droves.

Keluto decided to come back home. He tried his luck at fishing. He soon became an accomplished fisherman attracting clients at both the primary and secondary schools in our area. Keluto had risen from despondency and once again his pockets were loaded. As the saying goes, “old habits die hard”. Keluto soon ‘relived’ his Bulawayo playboy days. Keluto would go and fish at a dam a dozen kilometres away from his homestead known as Mazvivamba. He would establish his ‘base’ there weeks on end. We would hear many stories that he had ‘married’ in the Mazvivamba area. Soon we would not see Keluto for several months only to see him back broke, dirty and certainly in need of a bath. Keluto would soon be back at it again. This time he would go and fish at Mahove, another dam in his area. After making lots of money from fishing we were told that Keluto had relocated to Gweru. He was said to be living in Mkoba with a ‘sweet sixteen’. Keluto would use cosmetics to postpone the physical testimonies to the passage of time all in the name of trying to impress his youthful lover. We never saw Keluto for more than six years but this did not dampen the ‘spirit’ of the rumour mill. Keluto was at it again as a ‘*maraita*’, so said the conspiracy theories. He came back home after being shown the ‘red card’ and infected with HIV/Aids by his sweet sixteen.

Back home, Keluto fell back on poverty and stigmatisation by some neighbours. His wife had had enough and went back to her parents’ home in Chiundura. So, a few concerned neighbours would assist him with food and money

for transport to occasionally visit hospitals for medication and check-ups.

4. From Reveller to Revelation

Graduating from high school meant a sense of ‘liberation’ from the stranglehold of parents. One would begin experimenting in many vices which potentially could ruin one’s life. It so happened that after I finished my secondary education, I enrolled at the University of Zimbabwe to begin my undergraduate studies. I took up residence at the New Complex Phase II which then was luxuriously indulgent and artfully designed.

This meant re-uniting with friends from my days in both junior and high schools. I soon realised that most of my friends had become permanent features at the university’s Students Union (SU) bar. It was very difficult for me to resist their overtures to join them at the SU bar. With no time I had firmly established myself as a regular patron at the bar. We were awash with cash, what with our termly pay outs and stints as temporary teachers (during the long vacation) in the rural areas under a programme for university students called TIRA (Teaching in Rural Areas) that had been designed to help rural schools with teachers.

TIRA meant a handsome amount of money to many of us, university students. My friend Jah B bought a car with proceeds from both TIRA and his pay outs. The car’s best days were long gone but this did not stop us from spending nights of riotous living in some of Harare’s most trendy night spots. Pop music ruled the roost in most of these night clubs. South African musicians such as Brenda Fassie and Yvonne Chaka Chaka were big during those years.

After taking one too many ‘lion lagers’ – duped *butsvuku* those days – we would try our skills on the dance floor. Time

and again the peace in the night clubs would be disturbed by revellers who had been intoxicated by alcohol. Fists would fly in all directions and for us it was time to leave for campus. Parties were very popular on the university campus and my friends and I soon became very famous for throwing parties. One such party was thrown by my roommate and I. We invited who we thought were the 'who is who?' on campus. The people invited included Miss Orientation Week, a few members of the Student Representative Council (SRC) and former classmates from our days in high school. Students were unevenly split between what were called the 'Nose brigades' i.e. those who spoke the English language with an Anglo-Saxon accent and the SRBs (Strong Rural Background). The nose brigades had mostly done their education at former white schools and hailed from the low density suburbs like Harare's plush Borrowdale and Highlands. They led very flamboyant and ostentatious lifestyles, driving posh cars and were fashion trendsetters. The nose brigades were a minority and most of them were non-residents residing in low density suburbs adjacent to the university campus. The SRBs came from the high density suburbs and rural areas. They did not speak the English language with an exaggerated accent. Most of the SRBs did not have an eye for fashion. They wore mainly cheap quality khakis and jeans bought for a song in downtown Harare. Shopping in downtown Harare required one to hone his/her negotiating skills. Most of the shops in that part of the town were owned by people of Indian origins who ran perennial 'sales' in their shops, from January to December. Students would buy clothes at these shops at 'reduced prices' after 'skilfully' negotiating for a 'discount'. Most male students, especially SRBs, thought it was a waste of money to buy

expensive clothes along Harare's first street where shops which sold designer clothes were housed. Most of the money was reserved for buying beer. I belonged to the SRBs although I had done my 'A' level at a former white school; I detested my brief flirtation with an alien culture at the school. My heart lay with rigours of boarding life at my former mission school. At the mission school, we were easy-going students willing to leave ordinary lives. I found myself being an SRB resonating with my own values and ideals of what I thought an African person was supposed to be like.

These were the heydays of the Zimbabwean music icon, Thomas 'Mukanya' Mapfumo's shows aptly nicknamed the *biras* (singular: *bira*). A *bira* in the Shona culture is a traditional ceremony to bring the dead back home as a spirit. Mukanya's music was made famous by the use of the traditional instruments known as *mbira* (thumb piano). These shows normally ended well after mid-night by which time the appreciative show goers would have fallen into a 'trance' reminiscent of the traditional *bira*. The major highlight of the *biras* was always the guitar wizardry of virtuoso guitarist, Ashton 'Sugar' Chiweshe. He made his guitar 'talk' and this earned him the nickname 'Sugar' because revellers asserted that his guitar work was as 'sweet' as sugar. Jah B and I would follow Mukanya wherever he was having a show to an extent that we became close to most of his band members. Mukanya's shows were also popular with many show goers because they were *pungwes*. Pungwes were all night meetings held by freedom fighters and villagers during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. The implication was that Mukanya's shows lasted all night to the satisfaction of those who had paid to attend. Mukanya was in the habit of playing a popular tune

titled: ‘*Shabeen*’ in the wee hours of the morning. The lyrics of the song went something like this:

Mari yangu yaperawo
Yapera neShabeen
Mukandituka mukandireva
Regayi ndidye mari yangu muShabeen
Regayi ndidye mari yangu mubhawa

Vachanya solate vachanya sokiss
Varume vespot, varume veshabeen
Kupedza mari yose, neSherry dzespot
Kupedza mari yose nenyaya yeShabeen
Shabeen, Shabeen, Shabeen

Vachanya solate vachanya sokiss
Varume vespot, varume veshabeen
Kupedza mari yose, neSherry dzespot
Kupedza mari yose nenyaya yeShabeen
Shabeen, Shabeen, Shabeen

We would sing along Mukanya, oblivious of the message of the track *Shabeen*. The song basically implores male revellers not to spend money on beer and women of ill-repute or the women of the night (*Sherry dzesport*). A *Shabeen* is a house mostly in Zimbabwe’s high density suburbs, turned into an illegal beer outlet. *Shabeens* are very popular with beer lovers in Zimbabwe and are mainly patronised at night. *Shabeens* are run by ‘*Shabeen Queens*’ many of who became successful business women. We would shout ourselves hoarse apparently in appreciation of the quality music of the legend as we danced the night away. Mukanya would belt hit after hit

as the appreciative crowd danced crazily to the music. Usually the *biras* ended at 3:30am and it would be time to go back to the university campus halls of residence for a few hours of sleep before we were on the road again now for intellectual feeding.

After finishing my first degree I got a job as a teacher in Zimbabwe's Mashonaland province. I was asked to teach History and English language at one of the secondary schools in the province. I arrived at the school on a hot afternoon at the beginning of the year, clad in jeans with effects of the previous day's binge drinking still evident. The school did not have an administration block and converted a classroom to serve that purpose. This meant that the headmaster, teachers, bursar and clerks were all housed under one roof. When I got to the headmaster's 'office', I met a teacher who was pot-bellied and I concluded that he could be the school headmaster. When he went out, I began to enquire about the proximity of beer outlets to the school. I was not aware that I was enquiring from the real headmaster who I thought was just an ordinary teacher. He hated all teachers who drink, especially those who drink on duty. From that day he had a very negative attitude about me despite the fact that at some stage I excelled in my duties as a teacher at the school.

I wrote my little piece of history as a teacher-in-charge of the debating club. I was assigned the task of coaching the school debating club which won the district debating competitions a record three consecutive years. The school where I taught did not attract the best students. It shared its catchment area with more established schools and so this meant that the best students would enrol at these schools. Those students who had failed to secure places at these more established schools would enrol at our school. The school

was axiomatically bereft of a reading culture. As teachers, we struggled to motivate students to appreciate the importance of education. The situation was compounded by the ‘gold rush’ in Mashonaland province. The nearest city to my school was located in an area with many gold mines, some functional and others disused. Many youths joined the gold rush and our students were no exception. These youths involved in illegal gold mining were nicknamed *makorokoza* or *mabhagabhaga* – a name which suggested that these individuals were more of money mongers. The *makorokoza* thrived in the underworld. They were involved in all sorts of illicit activities. *Chikorokoza* (their gold panning activity) was characterised by the law of the jungle. Stories abound that during quarrels they would hack each other to death. Fights often broke out where gold deposits had been discovered and in most cases they were fatal. Their work was labour intensive because it involved digging tunnels and because of this, the *makorokoza* are famed for their voracious appetites for food and drugs. They normally prepared the staple diet sadza using big metal tins, and as soon as the food is served it would be history. Some of them made huge fortunes of money from these activities but as the saying goes, “a fool and his money are soon parted”. Most of the *makorokoza* were big spenders. At some of the city’s beer outlets, they were very conspicuous by the way they spent money. They would break into song to convey the message of how bottomless their pockets were and also take jibes at how civil servants lived from hand to mouth. They would for example say, ‘*Tobudzasa isu vana vehurudza maticha achitambura*’ (We have lots of money to buy beer while teachers miserably salivate for lack of it). At some of the province’s popular bars, the *makorokoza* would be seen with a bevy of women in tow. They moved with their cash in bags.

As a teacher then, I always ran into a budget deficit because of my love of the 'brown bottle'. The extravagant lifestyle of the *makorokoza* made me decide to try my luck at small-scale mining. I did not want to go into gold mining so as to lead the reckless lifestyle of *makorokoza* (singular: *korokoza*) but to raise funds to improve my life and perhaps be able to buy properties. I also needed money to quench my thirst for alcohol. The process involved registration with the Ministry of Mines. I filled all the necessary documents and made payments required. In no time I had secured my licence and off to the 'jungle' I went. My mine was pegged in the Mhondoro area about 40 km from where I was stationed. I made an 'SOS' to my sister in the diaspora for funds to bankroll my mining operations which she generously agreed to do. I used the money to buy shovels, piks, utensils, plastics for making shelter etc. I then started the daunting task of hiring works. For a start, I needed 5 strong young men who had already been 'initiated' and could withstand the rigours of life in the bush. I gave the task of recruiting the workers to a former student of mine who was out of employment. He managed to assemble a team of 5 young men who went into overdrive in trying to assure me that they would be equal to the task at hand. I later learnt that one of them, Jimmy was mentally challenged. I travelled to the mine every weekend to check on the progress of my workers. Chatting with them was a joy. They had a keen sense of humour that I could not wait visiting them. Jimmy was their favourite punching bag; he was always the receiving end of their jokes. I remember they would try to expose Jimmy's shortcomings by asking him silly questions. They would say to Jimmy for example, '*Mwana wemunin'ina wako kana ari mukuru kwauri, unomuti chinyi?*' (If your younger brother's son is older than you, what

do you call him)? Jimmy's reply was, '*Mwana mwana, hazvina basa kuti mukuru kwandiri*' (I would call him my son even if he is older than me). It was a way of measuring Jimmy's IQ. Jimmy would of course fail to realise the fact that the son of your father's brother if he is older than you, he is an elder brother and not a son according to the Shona culture. I really cherished these visits to my mine. I would also join them at lunch. The food was anything but delicious. They did not follow any particular recipe when preparing relish. Theirs was *bambazonke*: they would just boil vegetables and meat together and occasionally added cooking oil and tomatoes. The sadza was cooked at lightning speed; it was never allowed to boil for a while.

As time progressed, they began to take French leave and by and large work was not being done to my satisfaction. Having studied History, I, Putinto used the Habsburg time-honoured principle of divide and rule. It was not in my interests for the workers to form a united front. This worked for a while as the workers fell over each other for favours from me. One of them, Ticha was such an incurable gossip. Normally, after my usual visits, he would volunteer to see me off to the bus-stop where I would catch a lift back to my residing area. He felt obligatory to give me a blow by blow account of the things that had happened during my absence. Ticha would go to town about how lazy his workmates were. According to him, they spent time stealing *mavhizi* (stones with visible gold granules). They were alleged to disappear at times and work for other mine owners for a quick buck. Ticha recommended that they be fired. I did not want to jump the gun. For me, it was imperative to do my own investigations. My task was made easier when I met one of the employees, Jowa, in town. From the time I first met him,

Jowa had struck me as a stranger to the truth. He had told me stories about his heroic exploits as an accomplished *korokoza*. Jowa had no permission to be absent from duty. He started telling me all sorts of stories about his 'ill' mother that he wanted to collect his clothes. He wanted to see the doctor and a host of many other half-truths. It was a catch 22 situation for me. If I suspended him, I risked a backlash from his workmates who could sabotage me in support of their workmate. On the other hand, I was supposed to demonstrate my authority by disciplining Jowa. After carefully weighing the pros and cons, I decided that discretion was the better part of valour. He got away with it.

After Ticha and his workmates had dug ore I deemed enough to take to the mill, I hired a truck and we did two loads. I waited with bated breath in anticipation of a handsome amount of gold that would be realised. My anxiety was turned into a nightmare when the ore processed yielded not even a single gram of gold. The dice had been cast. It was a matter of time before I threw in the towel. I had always regarded myself as a fighter and not a quitter. I put on a brave face and my team reassured me that we should not give up. We went back to the mine and decided to continue mining more ore. I must confess, however, that I appeared to have lost hope. My visits to the mine began to decrease. Five weeks down the line, I went to the mine. I was terribly shocked with what greeted my sight on arrival. The mine had been abandoned and my employees had disappeared with all the tools I had bought. It was a moment of truth; the venture had indeed been a wild goose chase. Dejected, I walked to the bus-stop where I caught a lift back to Kadoma to lick my wounds.

Meanwhile I sought refuge in a rejuvenated interest in alcohol. I normally went drinking with my friends, Abel, TK, Diva, Joze and many others. Our weekends were characterised by heavy drinking as we hopped from bottle store to bottle store as we tried to quench our seemingly megalomaniac's thirst for alcohol. I dreaded the mornings because of the terrible hangovers I had to nurse. No sooner had I started the process of nursing my hangover than I would get a call from one of my drinking partners that we should go for a braai at a popular 'hide-out' along the Harare-Bulawayo highway. I would oblige albeit grudgingly because I knew that a braai meant much more than roasting meat. It meant taking alcohol and the cycle would repeat itself.

At my work place, I continued to be a thorn in the flesh of the authorities. I did not take kindly to my rights being trampled upon. I regarded myself as the voice of the voiceless. Some headmasters are in reality hard masters because they delight in inflicting pain on their subordinates. Instilling discipline in schools is not bad but if it is done in zealous pursuit of ulterior motives meant to serve the oversized egos of certain individuals running schools, then that might result in disquiet in schools. My formative years as a teacher can in essence be described as my trials and tribulations. I think I was little understood so suffice to say that I was rebel with a cause. That era is a sad chapter of my life which I have tried not to retrieve from the dusty drawers of history but without much success. Ironically as I was approaching the twilight zone of my teaching career, I worked under school authorities who were administrators par excellence. I really enjoyed teaching during those particular years to an extent that I miss being a classroom practitioner.

I very much looked forward to school holidays because this meant taking a well deserved break and retreating to the comfort zone of my rural home. Holidays also meant re-uniting with my parents, siblings, relatives and friends from my years in junior school. I enjoyed roaming the wilds, my favourite pass time. I usually went on the walks with two of my cousins or alone if they were not available. I was very motivated taking walks because of the added advantage of harvesting wild fruits which were found in abundance. I used to walk distances as long as 10 km. It was the tonic that I needed especially after a long eventful school term. Listening to the melodious chipping of birds filled me with a lot of joy. However, one of my cousins, a sharp shooter used catapults to kill birds for his relish. He never missed his target. I would occasionally stop to chat with young herdboys looking after cattle. I have fond memories of my days as juvenile when I used to join my cousins to herd cattle. The thing that attracted us most was bull fights. Bull fights made headline news in the village with camps that were mutually hostile to each other because of the different bulls they wanted to win. In most cases bull fights would run concurrently with fights of the owners of these bulls because of disputes over the likely outcome of the bull fights. I cherished walking in the forest during the rainy season because of the likelihood of harvesting *hova* (mushroom). Mushroom is a delicacy and people compete with baboons to harvest it. With the advent of neo-liberal economic reforms, many people fell out of employment with nothing to fall back on. This resulted in the commercialisation of non-timber products like wild fruit and mushroom.

My other pass time was visiting the local business centre called Chachacha. At the business centre I met like-minded

people I would engage with in conversation and debates. We mainly debated about soccer especially about three of the biggest teams in Zimbabwe namely Dynamos, Highlanders and CAPS United. Clearly, Dynamos was the most supported team followed by Highlanders and then CAPS United. The debates were so heated that fights could easily have broken out. Arguments also centred on who was the more accomplished singer between legends, Thomas Mapfumo and Oliver Mtukudzi. The debate would at times be eclipsed by emerging powerhouses like Devera Ngwenja Jazz Band that was based in the small mining town of Mashava in Masvingo province.

At Chachacha I frequented Tapiwa Bottle Store where one of the workers, Abel was my close friend. Our friendship was rock solid. He normally bought me a beer or two every time I visited him. The revellers at Tapiwa Bottle Store were mostly local teachers. They were the 'who is who' in that part of the country as evidenced by the respect they were accorded. I befriended most of them and would engage them in very lively discussions. At times, however, the discussions would degenerate into nasty exchanges of words. I realised that alcohol was getting the better of me and certainly my days as a blotto were in their twilight zone.

My Damascus moment was when I suspected that I was suffering from ulcers albeit tests proved otherwise. Nevertheless, I did a serious soul searching and realised that I had no reason for not being part of God's great big family. I made a u-turn in my life and quitted the 'brown bottle'. I started frequenting the Methodist Church. Since then, I have never looked back. That's my story which saw me travel the long arduous journey from reveller to revelation.

5. The Television Wars

During the 80s, growing-up in rural Zimbabwe was very exciting. One would never feel lonely because of the lots of entertainment that the youths used to enjoy. Part of the activities involved playing plastic balls with friends, herding cattle, harvesting wild fruit and listening to *ngano* – folktales told by grandparents at night. The *ngano* included those stories involving characters of wild animals such as tortoises, hares, baboons, hyenas and birds of the air. They were thrilling and left us spellbound. I was most fascinated when hearing those stories in *ngano*, stories with animal characters that performed human activities and interacted with human characters. My best character was the hare – *tsuro magen'a* – the trickster who in those stories was always depicted as a character full of wittiness, humour and intelligence.

As time went on, life in the rural areas begun to change, but I cannot confirm whether it was changing for the better or for the worse. During the evening, time we (youths) normally gathered around grandparents – *mbuya* or *sekuru* – listening to *ngano*, was replaced by something none of us ever imagined before. It so happened that in 1982, my parents bought a television set which was powered by a car battery. Time and again the battery had to be recharged at our nearest shopping centre. The battery was rather heavy so ‘wars’ would erupt between me and my siblings about who was supposed to take the battery for recharge. To resolve the problem, my elder sister and I hatched a plan. We divided into two camps that were mutually antagonistic to each other alongside our music tastes. My sister and I belonged to the

‘more enlightened’ camp because we fancied ourselves ‘civilised’, my sister had completed her Ordinary Level which she had passed with flying colours, and I was doing form four then. By virtue of seniority and education level, our camp normally triumphed at the expense of our younger siblings, who in fact were still struggling with their primary education.

The other camp comprised my young brothers. One was doing grade seven and the other, grade six. The two were not exactly the best of friends but usually ganged-up when it came to protecting each other’s interests during television watching at prime time. Their protests assumed many forms. Some very unconventional like screaming or making noise while standing in front of the television set as they blocked us from viewing it. Other forms included disconnecting the battery from the television set.

My sister and I were hooked on a television programme called Grammar Images. This programme featured such legendary pop singers and groups like Sir Cliff Richard, Sir Elton John, Fleetwood Mac (my personal favourite), Hot Chocolate, Status Quo, Commodores, Dire Straits, and many others that were famous during those days. My young brothers liked the programme, *Mvengemvenge* (also known as *Izomugido* in Ndebele language). They liked Devera Ngwenja Jazz Band, Okavango Boys, Dendera Kings and many other local groups who entertained and educated the youths through their music. The ‘wars’ would resume over how long each camp was entitled to watch television. The ‘guns’ eventually fell silent with the demise of the television set: It was dropped down by my young brother only about three months after the set was bought, and it was never repaired.

6. Bliss Was It in That Dawn to Be Alive

When I saw the inscription ‘Welcome to Dadaya High School’, on an emotional return to my former school, I suddenly remembered the lyrics ‘*Maborder anoramba, anoramba Mwari Baba, tichambomwawo koro [...] maticha anoramba, anoramba Mwari Baba, tichambodzidzisa maths [...]*’. (Boarding students deny; they deny our beloved Father, God, we will need to drink *koro*/sugar-water solution [...] teachers deny, they deny our beloved Father, God, we will need to teach maths [...]). These are lyrics of a popular song we used to sing in church during our years at our beloved Dadaya Mission School. Tears started running down my cheeks as I held my picture, a relic of a cherished teenager hood spent at Dadaya. A myriad of images imprinted in my mind like ducklings are to the sound of their mother’s call, kept coming as I promenaded along the school driveway, three decades after my departure in the 80s. I had a distinct sense of *déjà vu* as I watched the current crop of students going about their chores. They seemed oblivious of the fact that they also one day would leave Dadaya. I recalled my glory days when I first set foot at Dadaya after having completed my primary education at Vungwi School in neighbouring Shurugwi district during the turbulent years of Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle.

During my penultimate year at primary school, I began to seriously consider my school choice for secondary education. This necessitated a discussion with my father who had also gone through the secondary education system before taking up the teaching profession. My father had gone to Kutama

Boys High and Dadaya Mission. I was as sure as day follows night that I was destined to attend either of these two schools. It was indeed a formality to ask for his opinion. We agreed that I would apply to both schools when the time came. I spent the rest of the year fancying myself a border at a mission school. When eventually I was doing my last year in junior school, the time for me to do applications for a form one place had arrived. It was very much fashionable to apply for as many places as one could during those years. One of the most popular phrases we used in our application letters was that we hoped to 'pass with flying colours'. A letter without that phrase was deemed to have been written by a mediocre student. We would show off the number of responses we had received from prospective secondary schools. I applied to many highly esteemed schools that included Dadaya, Kutama, St. Augustines, Cyrene, Goromonzi, Fletcher and St. Patricks. As the year wore on, my preferred choice for my high school began to gravitate towards St Augustines High School which is in The Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

During this time my father bought me a lot of books, particularly English novels and plays written by playwrights, William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens. All of the books were simplified versions suitable for a person of my age. Some of the Shakespearean plays he bought me were Julius Caesar, Hamlet and Macbeth. I took to reading these books like a duck takes to water. My father was at pains to impress on me that these were the type of books I would be reading in high school, and would help a great deal to improve both my written and spoken English.

My father recited passages from mainly Macbeth and Julius Caesar and I was so impressed that I could not wait for

the year to end so that I begin my secondary education. I also liked Charles Dickens' book, *Oliver Twist*. I was very touched at the abuse *Oliver Twist* was subjected to especially when he would ask for more food when the pangs of hunger were biting. I also read lots of Shona novels such as *Gebena harina moto*, *Dzasukwa mwana asinabembe*, *Mweya waMbuya Nebanda*, *Ndakaitei* and many others. I was so impressed with the portrayal of Chiedza, a character in *Gebena harina moto*. She was portrayed as having dazzling beauty to an extent that I began to dream of meeting a girl like Chiedza later in my life. In a way I was preparing myself for secondary work.

Meanwhile, as the year moved towards the sunset of its life, I realised that the 'day of reckoning' was high. Examinations were just by the corner. Our grade seven teacher would ask us to come for extra lessons in the afternoons and over the weekends. We sat for our examinations in the month of October. On the eve of our first examination, our headmaster advised us to eat as many boiled eggs as we could. During those days things said by a headmaster were not disputed. They were taken as gospel truth. Our thinking then was that eating lots of eggs before sitting for an examination would make an individual pass as if eggs would help us pass. I kindly asked my mother to boil six eggs for me if she was to entertain any hopes of me passing. After having eaten the eggs, I began to bubble with confidence that I would make mince meat of the examinations. I now have hazy recollections about what the examinations were about. I however, recall that Shona gave us a few anxious moments because of its different dialects. Meanwhile, before each paper I would ask my mother to prepare eggs for me. Finally, the torture posed by the examinations was over and we began to wait with bated

breath the outcome of the examinations. It was during this time that I got an offer to do my form one at St. Augustines. My happiness realised no bounds as I celebrated with my friends that milestone. The liberation war had spread to many parts of the country. It was no longer safe for me, given my age to travel that long distance to St. Augustines to do my form 1. I was hurt at not being able to do secondary education at my dream school. I however, soon forgot about St. Augustines.

The results finally came out in early December and indeed the 'miracle eggs' had done it. I passed my grade seven examinations. There was now a choice between Dadaya and Kutama High schools. My father settled for Dadaya which is near Zvishavane and was nearer to our home. We woke up at the break of dawn and headed for the then Shabani (now Zvishavane) to look for a form one place at Dadaya. During the days, the settler regime had imposed a curfew which prohibited people from leaving their homes before 6am. We were in a dilemma, if we left home after 6am, we would miss the bus to Zvishavane and if we left before 6am, we could be shot by the settler regime's soldiers. My father decided that we bite the bullet. We avoided using the conventional paths and decided to walk through the forest on our way to the bus-stop. Fortunately for us, we found the bus still loading passengers and my father was visibly relieved. We got into the bus as it roared into life and off we headed towards Zvishavane. We arrived at about 10am. My father joined hands with a parent who was also going to Dadaya to look for a place for his daughter and hired a taxi. Within no time we were at Dadaya. I could not believe my sight when I saw the school I were to spend a great four years. The headmaster offered me a place and I was on cloud nine. We then went

back home. We were given a resounding welcome by my mother and siblings. Word soon spread in our village that I had got a form one place at Dadaya. I was soon telling anyone in the village who cared to listen about how beautiful Dadaya High school was.

When my father got his December salary we went to Gweru, some dozens of kilometres from home to buy my school uniforms. I remember that then it was imperative as far as parents were concerned to buy an oversized blazer so that one could use it for the entire duration once one was in high school. In retrospect, one can be forgiven for thinking that it was meant for someone aged 20. The argument used was that I would use it up to form four. Next in line was a baggy pair of grey trousers and other clothing items on the list. As a would-be form one student, I had not yet developed an eye for fashion and so I was content with anything my father bought me. He also bought me lots of books including a dictionary. My father bought me a trunk for keeping my personal effects as well. It was the dream of every student to own a trunk. I asked one of my cousins to emblazon my name in opulent white on the trunk. It was common practice to have one's name written on one's trunk for the purposes of identification. I asked him to write the name, Dadaya High School, on the trunk as well so that all and sundry would not mistaken my new status. Visiting Gweru would be incomplete without sitting down to eat *zvipondamwoyo* in one of the eateries opposite Kudzanayi bus terminus. We went to one of the eateries where we did instant justice to the *zvipondamwoyo*.

My mother also did her part by stitching my name on all my uniforms because I had been reliably informed that there were some among students who were nimble fingered. It was very important and wise to prepare for any eventuality. I was

fortunate that one of my former stream mates happened to be also going to Dadaya to begin his form one. At least I was ensured of good company. We regularly met to discuss our impending journey and new life at our mission school. The two of us were visualising a happy stay.

On the eve of my departure, one of my aunts came home ostensibly to bid me farewell. She soon made her intentions clear. During those years it was taboo for a child to go to a boarding school for example without visiting a traditional healer so as to be given charms for use at school meant to prevent misfortunes to fall on you. She suggested that we visit Rasputin-like sorcerers and soothsayers. My parents being Christians flatly refused and I breathed a sigh of relief. Then, came the ‘Sermon on the Mount’. We had now been joined by 3 uncles. The first thing I was told was that I was never supposed to ‘touch’ a girl. Touching a girl meant proposing love to girls, this I was told would distract me from my studies. One of my uncles was at pains to explain to me that I was now going to be taught by highly educated teachers, products from internationally recognised universities. The other uncle brought me a student’s companion and began ‘bombarding’ me with what then appeared to be ‘earth-shattering’ words. He would say something like, ‘You will suffer the consequences if you play at school’ but he pronounced the word like ‘*kwezekwensix*’ or something like that. The sermon went on and on until the early hours of the morning. After their departure, I went to my bedroom and was awake the whole night as I pondered over what I was about to begin – a life away from home.

My mother woke me up to roast a free range chicken, humorously referred to by some as a ‘road runner’ because by virtue of it being a ground forager, it is not only confined to

the home but occasionally strays away as it looks for food. At Dadaya the roasted chicken was referred to as a *chitunba* (lit: corpse but not an equivalent of that of the human being), I think because of the fact that it was a dead chicken. Day one at boarding school was incomplete without a *chitunba*. The day had arrived. Indeed bliss was it in that dawn to be alive. I was so excited to be going to Dadaya. Boy! Little did I know that the ‘forces of evil’ were lurking in the dark.

Day one in the classroom was exciting. Listening to the graduate teachers made me very happy. One by one, my teachers introduced themselves to the class. The major highlight was the introduction by our Geography teacher, Mr Ben Tshuma. He said, ‘My name is Ben Tshuma, fresh from the varsity’. I remember when we were back at the dormitory my friends and I talked about it *ad nauseum*. Our History teacher happened to be my cousin brother, Mr Edward Tatenda. We came from the same village and so that idea helped me to settle down faster than others. We were so excited about starting form one but we cannot blame ourselves for this because such was the appeal of graduates as I have alluded to in the past. The week proceeded on well in the classroom.

Back in those days it was obligatory for new students to undergo some form of ‘rituals of initiation’. The term was used in apparent reference to *kunyunyuswa* (being converted to real boarding school students). This entailed new students being abused by the old students as a way of reminding us that the honeymoon was over and that we had started new lives away from home without our parents and in a way that was meant to prepare us to the trials and tribulations of life. Meanwhile the ‘initiation’ was beginning to rear its ugly head at the hostels. We were subjected to all kinds of abuse

especially at the hands of form twos. We were asked to do all sorts of odd things by our seniors, those in forms two upwards. However, what we ‘enjoyed’ most was singing the song, ‘*Tiri zvikwari zvakavinga makoko*’. Our tormentors would sing, ‘*doreh so mi doh*’ and we would echo, ‘*Tiri zvikwari zvakavinga makoko*’. One chore I detested was being forced to do laundry by our seniors! I remember being asked to do their laundry. It meant washing their clothes using my own soap. As if this was not enough, bed bugs were doing their own kind of initiation. The beds in our dormitories were bed bug infested. We (new comers/form ones) would dread bed time. We soon devised a master plan. We would over the weekends boil water and pour it in every nook and cranny in our dormitories. However the school authorities eventually hired fumigators after we protested and the bed bugs met their Waterloo.

The dining hall fell under the jurisdiction of the boarding master, Mr Fundayi. He was a very affable old man.

1979 marked the end of Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle. It was an arduous journey to the country’s independence. The liberation struggle culminated in the Lancaster House Conference of 1979 which ushered in independence. The former colonial power, Britain hosted the former protagonists who had been fighting each other. The conference moved at a snail’s pace because of the divergent views of the delegates. For all purposes and intents, it was a ‘tortuous cliff hanger’. We were kept abreast of the deliberations at Lancaster by Sir Garfield Todd, the former Prime Minister of the then Southern Rhodesia. Todd was a missionary of the Church of Christ who had migrated from New Zealand and started a mission station at Dadaya in his huge ranch. The school was once located in the Mafala area.

However, because of water woes, the school moved to its present location near Ngezi River. Todd was involved in nationalist politics and was a member of ZAPU (Zimbabwe People's Union) led by Joshua Nkomo. He therefore attended the Lancaster House Conference in that capacity. Each time he came back from Britain, he briefed us about the progress of the conference. We looked forward to his sermon in church because literally he would talk about the conference.

I also enjoyed going to the garden for manual work where the man in charge was Mr Sogwana. What excited me most was his keen sense of humour. His outbursts when we were late for duty sent us into a hysterical state. He would call us all sorts of names. At times he would give us lectures on Idi Amin of Uganda. He did this in a bid to show us that he was also knowledgeable in History and he was not just a mere caretaker. Mr Sogwana would also go to town about his son who was doing an engineering degree in England. Everyone who went to the garden either on duty or to do punishment would be told about this son of his. Doing manual work at the garden also translated into benefits in the form of carrots, tomatoes, peas we were given by Mr Sogwana. At times when we got to the garden earlier than Mr Sogwana, we would immediately do our chores in order to impress him and we would be rewarded handsomely by stories about the history of the school.

Academic wise, I proved to be very gifted in the Arts, as Mathematics was giving me anxious moments to an extent that I never got to be in good books with all my Maths teachers. I remember we never got to have a sound relationship. I think the only time I enjoyed Maths was when Mr Fambayi stood for Mr Todiniwhe who had gone on leave. Meanwhile I got to be very close to Tshuma (never mind his

pride) because I had scored the highest mark in Bible Knowledge, one of the subjects he taught, and earned myself the nickname 'Rabbi'. I also tried my luck at proposing love to a few girls and managed to steal a heart or two for brief periods.

School holidays meant meeting former classmates. One such person I very much enjoyed meeting was Ruva, the 'Princess' who was Headman Moyo's daughter. She had the looks and every boy who had learnt at our primary school during my era dreamt of dating her. She was at Moleli High School. One needed to be very courageous to make one's intentions known to her. We would, as boys, all dream of a day we would deliver the *coup de grace* and have her into submission. That remained a pipedream. The end of the holidays meant going back to Dadaya.

When I was writing my end of year exams in 1982, I could not come to grips with the fact that my stay at my beloved Dadaya was about to come to an end and a feeling of ennui engulfed me. I could not believe that the road to form four had come to an end. The road that had seen me growing into a gawky teenager with no formal tutorship in urbane mannerisms.

7. The Fashion Addicts of Silveira Mission School

Saturday meant many things to many students in the early 80's during our heydays at Silveira Mission School. To some it was a golden opportunity to 'loosen up' by imbibing the holy waters of immortality. Others from Zvishavane, Mberengwa, Chivi, Zaka, and Gutu who had experienced the liberation struggle would take illicit drugs. More others saw it ideal to imbibe knowledge while some would roam the wilds and to the fashion conscious. It was a godsend to parade the latest from their wardrobes.

I remember very well the boys who took to fashion like a duck takes to water. They include Roby Waiti, who got the nickname 'Waitanga', because he loved white clothes, Ding Dong Gambanga, Morrison Tsoroyadziya, Great Bheki Gabarinocheka Kin Khoro Dumburadini, Jig More Mutendashuga, Bhari Ngende Dumburejecha, and many others. To them Saturday especially when there was a disco was their favourite day. They would wear their best fashions. Wearing fashionable clothes was meant to catch the attention of those of the fairer sex – *vengumworefu* – who would easily fall prey when 'scratched'. Form ones mainly were content to wear their barringtons (name given to the boys' uniform). They (Form ones) would crowd the stage going through their paces on the dance floor in appreciation to the music of Devera Ngwenja Jazz Band. When pop music by such artists as Michael Jackson was played, juniors would vacate the stage and give way to their seniors in their gorgeous well ironed outfits. Senior boys pulled out all the stops to impress with

their latest outfits. Even the ‘Great’ Bheki ‘Gabarinocheka’ was not found wanting. I remember him never missing an opportunity to wear his pair of sting khakhi trousers. Bheki had made a name, Gabarinocheka, for himself by his love of the crust piece of bread. He would always be the first one to go into the dining hall so that he would get his beloved crust slice of bread before everyone else.

There was a low intensity competition among the boys to wear the latest fashion. The likes of Ding Dong and Jig More became very popular after their performance of the play, ‘My Uncle Grey Bonzo’. They became cult heroes and helped to popularise the *bang bang* jean trousers. My friend Sam and I even asked our parents to buy us the *bang bang* jean trousers because we felt that we could not be left behind.

8. *Reviled by Some and Embraced by Many:* *The Story of Kunga Vhovho*

As I was growing up in the 70's each village had 'specialists' in their own areas of interest. Some were 'specialists' in digging anthills, some in harvesting honey, some as blacksmiths while others were famed for digging wells. My cousin brother, Kunga Vhovho had made a name for himself as 'Jaguar' the snake charmer. Each time a snake was seen and disappeared into a hole, people would ask Jaguar to dig it out. Kunga would never be found wanting. He would charm the snake attracting a huge crowd and more often than not people would demand that the snake be violently extinguished from the face of the earth.

I witnessed so many of these heroic antics of Kunga. Word would spread like fire on a dry prairie each time he was about to dig out a snake. It was a spectacular sight of these snakes of various shapes and sizes Kunga would dig out, certainly it was not for those of a nervous disposition. If a snake would disappear into a hole and Jaguar was away enjoying 'ndari' –traditionally brewed beer – somewhere people would simply put stones on the hole (so that the snake would not come out) and wait for Jaguar to come even if it meant waiting for several days for his return. After Kunga's return and as sure as day follows night, Jaguar would dig the snake out. Such was Kunga's invincibility.

His exploits as a snake charmer did not go unnoticed. He earned himself some admirers both male and female. I was one of the loyalists in the 'Kunga Fan Club'. Kunga was then a senior bachelor in his late thirties. He was a celebrated

playboy. Some people never liked Kunga for this reason. Legend had it that he lived in Bulawayo and had left a family there. During that era the 'specialists' enjoyed a cult status in the villages. So it happened that Kunga stole the heart of a house girl who worked for a teacher at Chirumba Secondary School. Many people did not take Kunga seriously. They thought as usual he was at it again. Lo and behold, we were all taken by surprise when he sent emissaries to his in-laws with money to pay the bride wealth. The whole village was abuzz with rumours that Kunga had finally decided to settle down with his newly found sweetheart. Indeed there were a few broken hearts who had fancied themselves as future Mrs Vhovichos. They did not take kindly to this. They were also hoping to 'tie the knot' Kunga.

One thing I enjoyed most as a youngster growing in the 70's, was Kunga's use of the English language. I think it would be an understatement to call it English, perhaps it would suffice to call it 'Shonglish' (a combination of Shona and English if ever there can be a word like that). I very much enjoyed the mere fact that he was at pains in trying to impress his most faithful followers that he was at home with the English language. Growing up under the care of a father who would pride himself as a good English (he was and still is) I soon realised how bad Jaguar's English was. However, the fact remains that Kunga used to entertain us and as a folk hero.

Kunga and his wife were blessed with 3 children. One of them even went as far as attaining a university degree. He [Kunga] also managed to buy a sizeable herd of cattle for his 'new' family. He is now a pale shadow of his former self. His best days are long gone. He still loves his beer, each time I see him at the local business centre, Mutikizizi, he asks for a few

cents to buy beer for himself. That's the story of Jaguar who is still reviled by some but embraced by many.

9. *The Triumphal Return of the Forgotten Muchoni*

When I was growing up, I used to hear that there was a kinsman of ours, Spikita (now known as Muchoni – the long gone), who had ventured into the urban areas in the 1960's and never to be seen again. Muchoni had been notorious for 'witching' so we heard. Many accused him of keeping scandalous human skeletons and stinging bees in his closet. Several theories were put forward about what exactly had happened to the 'prodigal son'. Some said he had met his match and had been extinguished from the face of the earth, others said he had used love portions to marry a very beautiful Ndebele woman in Silobela where he was said to be living. Others said he had joined the 'Great Trek' to *Joni* – Johannesburg, South Africa where many men during those days went in search of greener pastures. Nobody really knew where Spikita was. The whole village soon forgot about him.

Sometime in 1995, I visited home. When I arrived at Senganai, our nearby shopping centre, I was greeted by a cousin of mine who appeared very excited. He told me that Much (many preferred to use that name when referring to Muchoni because it suites his status as diasporan) had been spotted in Gweru. I soon realised that the whole village was awash with rumours that Much's return was imminent. I could not hide my anxiety to meet Much.

Two days later, Much returned home in a blaze of glory. The witch tag on Much had been relegated to the dusty drawers of history. Time had erased it all from the minds of

the villagers that Much had witch tag on his name. Much was now simply viewed as a prodigal son and welcomed with loving arms. His home was a hive of activity with people giving him presents. I had an opportunity to meet him at his home. He looked frail and certainly qualified to be a member of the 'geriatric brigade'. I was introduced to him and we instantly liked each other. I liked the lighter side of Much. He joked a lot. Each time I would go home, I would make Much my drinking pal. He despised the other senior citizens. On hearing that I was a product of the University of Zimbabwe, Much was at pains to say that he did not trust the rural folk because they were not 'educated'. He regarded himself as educated although my father tells me he went up to standard 1. The only English he would speak was something like, 'I mean what koro' (whatever that meant).

Such was the story of Muchoni's triumphal return to his roots.

THE CLASH OF THE TITANS AND OTHER SHORT STORIES

is a sundry, marvellous collection of short stories that reflect and capture diverse life experiences. Mabeza and Mawere offer with great dexterousness a snapshot, richness, and practical potentialities of childhood to adulthood experiences in shaping, inspiring and influencing moral rectitude, industriousness and determination. This is an incisive and invigorating exposé steeped in candour and earnestness. For aficionados of creative writing, cognoscenti, students and instructors of English Literature, this is a collection to enjoy and cherish.

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